SPORTS

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QUEENS NEIGHBORHOODS

Road Show Scores a Net Ga

A troupe of performers takes its Internet information bus to

By Robin Haas

A Queens school district will play host to an unusual bus tour that travels around the country educating parents and teachers about the Internet — and how to stay one step ahead of the kids in the use of computers.

ParentsConnected Inc., a nationwide, Fort Lauderdale-based private company, will appear at IS 204 in Long Island City this evening, its only stop in Queens, and the first time the educational performance troupe will be appearing in New York State. The event, free and open to the public, is part of a nationwide road trip to teach people in person the basics of the Internet, online safety, and how to surf the Web in a family-friendly way.

"We're trying to help narrow the 'Digital Divide' by educating parents and teachers on how to use the Internet with their children," said Kaila Colbin, chief operating officer of ParentsConnected.

The troupe, with its brightly colored bus and stage sets, disseminates information with a show that includes audience participation, demonstrations, hands-on activities and pep rallies. In one skit, the ParentsConnected performers enact how a "bad guy" can easily and persuasively get an unsuspecting student to reveal private information from the Internet, such as the school he attends, and to encourage the child to meet this "new friend" after school.

Many older parents and teachers, having grown up without computers or digital technology, are intimidated and resistant to the technological advances; some harbor a feeling of being left in the dust by computer-savvy children.

Colbin said the ParentsConnected initiative bridges the gap in order for adults to help children ward off inappropriate situations on the Internet, and avoid sites that foster pornography, violence, hate and intolerance, and dangerous and illegal activities. The program also covers how to deal with hackers, viruses and cyber stalkers. Also, the basics on what the Internet is, how to surf the Web, logging on, educational opportunities, and how to enjoy the Internet in a family-oriented way.

School District 30 — which grabbed the chance to play host when a memo from the city Board of Education went out to all districts — sees the ParentsConnected seminar as a way of improving the interaction between the parents, schools, administrators and the students. (ParentsConnected is funded by private companies; the shows are presented for free.)

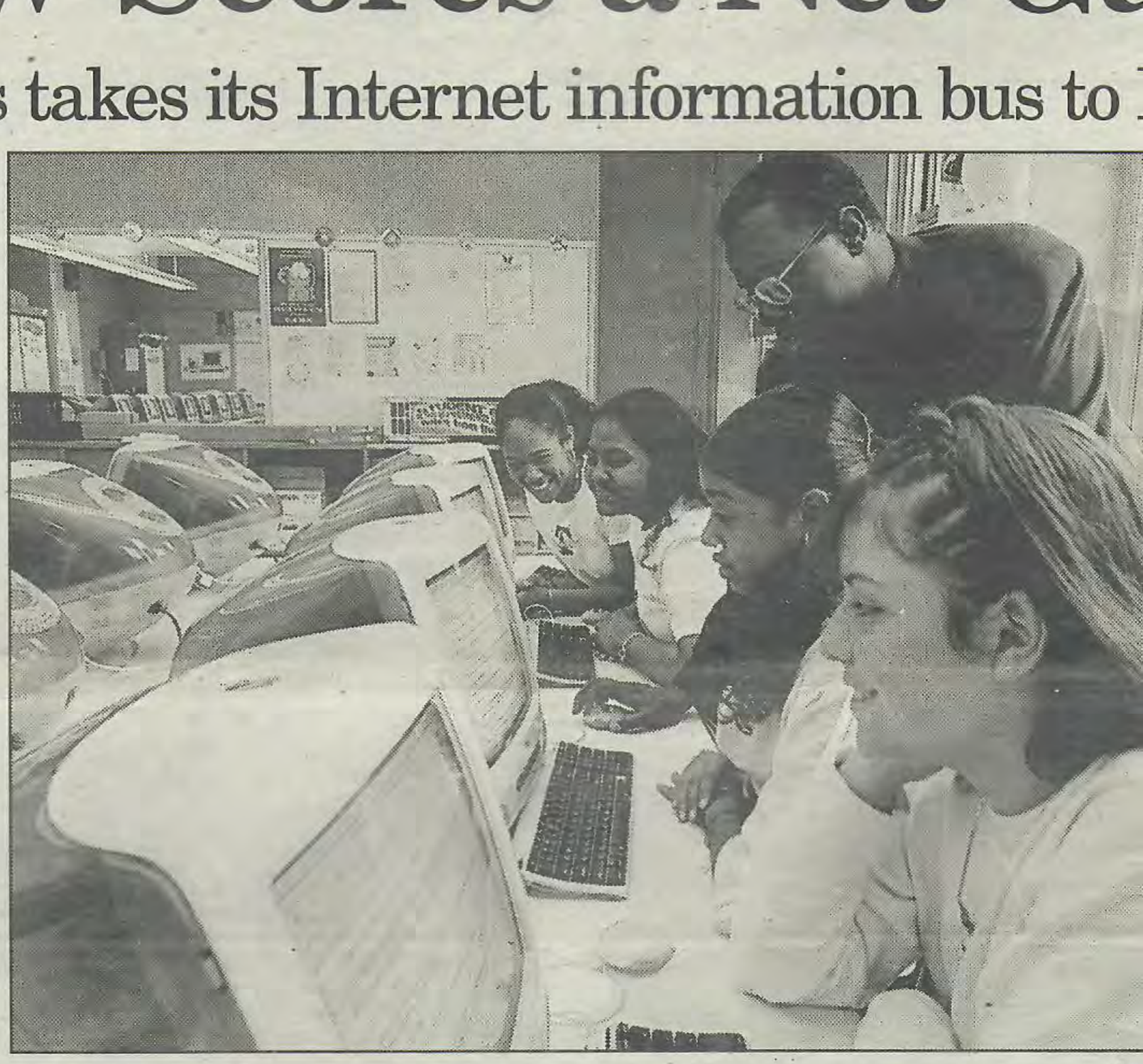
"I think there's a big communication gap between schools and families, and we have to bring them together," said Cheryl Quatrano, coordinator for SD 30, which serves Jackson Heights, Astoria, Corona, Long Island City, East Elmhurst and Woodside, and is home to 128 different languages and a large Hispanic population. She said, for example, that within her district, most parents don't know that each school has its own e-mail address where the parents can communicate with the staff, administration and other parents; find out about upcoming events; receive general announcements, or get homework assignments for children out sick. "It's the wave of the future, and I think more adults need to get involved," Quatrano said. "We want to educate them."

Quatrano, who also coordinates programming for the district's Magnet Schools, said she often sits by the computer with her own son. They do research, send e-mail to friends and family, check out movie reviews and find information about he of rare action figures. "It actually b gether — it's a group activity they

The ParentsConnected performa day will be held at IS 204, 36-41 28 p.m. to 6:45 p.m. in English and f 8:00 p.m. in Spanish. It will be evening with the district's annual Fair, to showcase the Magnet Schoo ute applications and answer questi are free, open to all, and offer refre chance to win prizes.

For additional information conta 30 at 718-777-4616 or ParentsC www.ParentsConnected.com.

Robin Haas is a freelance writer.



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IS 204's Arthur Griffith Jr. assists students, from left, Stephanie Galarza, Velesha Lera, Crystal Vizcarrondo